

NEWS RELEASES, 1995

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DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
For Immediate Release

Thomas W. Sweeney
(202) 219-4152

BIA ESTABLISHES FBI LIAISON FOR CHILD PROTECTION

Thanks to a newly established Bureau of Indian Affairs service, Indian tribes and schools can now better protect their children by using a fingerprint service that will detect the past criminal history of prospective and newly hired employees.

“We are very pleased to announce this important and needed new service, which will help to ensure the safety and well-being of our Indian children,” says Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada E. Deer.

The BIA’s Division of Law Enforcement Services has hired Security Specialist Kay Hayes to serve as its liaison with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for the fingerprint service. Tribes and tribal organizations that need background checks through the fingerprint service can contact Hayes at the Division of Law Enforcement Services, Operational Support Branch, P.O. Box 66, Albuquerque, N. M. 87103. (The office is located at 123 Fourth Street SW, Room 217, in Albuquerque). The current cost for each fingerprint search is \$22. Information about procedures and training is available by calling Hayes at (505) 766-8000, fax (505) 766-1425.

“This is a great opportunity for tribes to comply easily with The Indian Child Protection and Family Violence Prevention Act (Public Law 101-630) and the Crime Control Act of 1990, Child Care Worker Employee Background Checks (Public Law 101-647),” says Ted Quasula, the director of the BIA’s Division of Law Enforcement Services. Under the Crime Control Act, each Federal agency and facility, including those operated under contract, are required to perform a fingerprint check for each existing and newly hired employee who provides child-care services to Indian children (under the age of 18). The FBI fingerprint search includes a check of past state criminal history. However, the FBI search does not include local or tribal criminal histories.

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Administration Officials Deliver Progress Report To Tribal Leaders

A meeting with senior Clinton Administration officials and 106 tribal leaders on April 28 marked the one-year anniversary of the historic meeting with tribal leaders and President Clinton. This year's meeting focused on progress and accomplishments being made department-by-department in Indian affairs. The White House Domestic Policy Council released a 67-page report entitled *One Year Later: A Clinton Administration Progress Report to the Federally Recognized Tribal Nations One Year after the Historic April 29, 1994 Meeting with President Clinton and the Tribal Leaders*, detailing the work completed thus far.

Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt led the meeting with his report to the tribes describing the recent formation of the Domestic Policy Council's Working Group on American Indians and Alaska Natives. The working group, which Babbitt chairs, is intended not only to further strengthen relations between tribes and the federal government, but to facilitate coordination among departments on Indian policy matters. Babbitt also reported on a second priority of the working group, religious freedom. A proposed executive order currently is being drafted. Babbitt encouraged the tribes to comment on and support the order.

Babbitt told tribal leaders that executive order draft, on access to and protection of sacred sites, will be developed by the Interior Department. The order could direct federal land managers to notify, consult with, and accommodate tribes whenever federal activities might change or affect access to sacred sites. Babbitt updated the group on the 1994 presidential memorandum on eagle feather and parts. The Department of the Interior has since established a national repository in Denver,

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CO, to supply tribal religious leaders with eagle feathers and parts needed for traditional religious ceremonies. A presidential memorandum signed one year ago required this action.

Babbitt also reported that since the National American Indian Listening Conference held last May in Albuquerque, N. M., he has met with more than 200 tribes to continue the dialogue with tribal leaders and plans to visit at least four other states to meet with federally recognized tribes on their concerns.

Office of Management and Budget Director Alice Rivlin told tribal leaders that the current Federal budget reflects "a strong shift to tribal priority programs" as well as an overall 17-percent increase in Indian program funding since the Administration began. "We had a much improved consultation process," Rivlin said. "OMB is more involved than ever before." Rivlin answered numerous questions from tribal leaders as did other Administration officials.

Tribal leaders saw a demonstration of one of the working group's first priorities, which is to develop a government-wide consultation process that Federal agencies can incorporate in their dealings with tribes. The new process, called CODETALK, will allow Federal agencies and tribes to communicate and share information via the Internet. U.S. Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary David Barrum advised tribal leaders "that anyone going to be successful with organizations and enterprise must be on the information highway." The Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration last year awarded a \$150,000 grant to the Native American Public Broadcasting Corporation for a demonstration project that eventually will link all tribal nations with the "information superhighway."

Unprecedented progress in meeting with tribes and giving them more control over federal services and functions has been made by the Administration, said Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada Deer, who also told tribal leaders that "in the past six months I have met with more of you than many of my predecessors have during their entire tenure. During the short time of this Administration, there has been more consultation with tribes. I've listened and learned. I'm proud of this record and am confident that this Administration has met its trust responsibility to Indian tribes," Deer said.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM:
**“ONE YEAR LATER: A Clinton Administration Progress
Report to the Federally Recognized Tribal Nations One Year
After the Historic April 29, 1994 Meeting with President Clinton
and the Tribal Leaders”**

- ☐ Department of the Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada Deer meet regularly with tribes to fulfill and enhance the government-to-government relationship and consultation with Indian tribes. The Department has relocated and streamlined its repository for eagle feathers and parts to better serve tribal religious leaders who conduct traditional religious ceremonies. All of the Interior Department's agencies and offices are following a Secretarial Order that directs them to ensure that the trust resources of Indian tribes are conserved, identified, and protected.
- ☐ Department of Justice creates the Office of Tribal Justice to deliver better service to Indian tribes and Indian people from existing programs.
- ☐ Environmental Protection Agency establishes the American Indian Environmental Office to coordinate agency tribal operations to better protect tribal health and environments.
- ☐ Department of Agriculture forms a Native American Affairs working group to ensure that American Indians have access to the services and programs of USDA agencies.
- ☐ Department of Housing and Urban Development simplifies its Indian Housing program to give local tribes and Indian housing authorities more flexibility and quicker reuse of grant dollars.
- ☐ Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Native Americans provides grants to tribes and other Native American communities to establish businesses such as the Navajo Arts and Crafts Cooperative in Crownpoint, N.M., and the Nambe Pueblo's tour business in Santa Fe, N.M., the area's only Indian-owned and -operated tour operation.



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BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

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EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE: 9 A.M. JUNE 23, 1995

NORTHWEST TRIBES FISHING ACCESS SITES AGREEMENT SIGNED

Four Northwest Indian Tribes will receive in-lieu fishing sites on the Columbia River, which they are entitled to through treaty rights, thanks to a memorandum of understanding signed today by the Department of the Interior and the Department of the Army.

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada E. Deer and Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works John Zirschky both signed the agreement at the Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C. The agreement compensates the Nez Perce Tribe (Lapwai, Idaho), the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (Pendleton, OR), the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (Warm Springs, OR), and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Indian Nation (Toppenish, WA). Approximately 29 fishing sites along the Columbia River and the Bonneville Dam Pool will be acquired and constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the tribes from 1996 through 2000 at a total cost of \$57 million.

“We have worked very hard to achieve this agreement for the tribes,” says Ada E. Deer, the assistant secretary for Indian Affairs (head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs). “This agreement has been in the works for more than half a century and we are now gratified that we can begin to establish these fishing sites for the tribes. We especially appreciate the cooperation of the Army Corps of Engineers and want to thank Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works John Zirschky and his staff for their cooperation and effort in bringing these fishing sites closer to reality.”

Construction of the Bonneville Dam in the mid-1930s inundated approximately 37 fishing sites that the tribes had traditionally used. The Rivers and Harbors Act of 1945 authorized five fishing sites for Northwest Tribes to partially

compensate for their loss. These sites are now managed for the tribes by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. As a part of the agreement approved today, a \$6.2-million operation, maintenance and repair fund is being established by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

In 1988 Congress approved Public Law 100-581, Title IV, to more equitably compensate tribes for all of their fishing site losses that occurred because of the dam's construction. Pacific Northwest Tribes established their rights for access and fishing to accustomed Columbia River fishing sites through treaties signed during the 1850s.

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DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BUDGET CUTS WILL FORCE SOME INDIAN SCHOOLS TO CLOSE

The proposed \$31-million decrease in education funds in the FY 1996 Senate Appropriations Bill will result in school closures and will severely curtail school operations in the remaining Bureau of Indian Affairs elementary and secondary schools. Currently the Bureau is responsible for providing educational and residential services to approximately 49,000 Indian students in 187 schools in 23 states.

The Senate is proposing to cut an additional \$23.6 million from new construction funds and \$10 million from facility improvement and repair projects. Minor improvement and repair projects, roofing projects, and emergency repair projects will also be affected. The Bureau currently has more than \$660 million in unfunded facility life/fire safety, handicapped, and educational program work that require completion. "There is simply no justification for placing any Indian child in unsafe facilities," said Dr. John Tippeconnic, Director of the Office of Indian Education Programs.

"For the past five years, our Bureau-funded schools have developed nationally recognized programs that have resulted in increased student performance. The proposed cuts will severely curtail these reform efforts, which resulted in increased student academic performance, reduced dropout rates, increased attendance rates, higher level of accreditation, and improved total quality school programs," Dr. Tippeconnic added.

When students are deprived of educational opportunities, academic development, and social activities, there will be an increase in student antisocial behavior, substance abuse, and suicide, he said. School activities are among the few outlets these Indian students and their families have available to develop their academic, creative, and social skills. Some Indian students will drop out of school entirely, be forced to go to boarding schools, or go to overcrowded

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public schools. Public schools have limited financial resources and no increased tax base for additional school operations.

The proposed education cuts mean schools will lose their state and regional accreditation due to reduced course offerings, increased student/staff ratios resulting in the "warehousing" of students, reduction of student program/activities, and the lack of instructional resources and materials.

Indian and non-Indian communities alike will be devastated by cuts that will eliminate as many as 700 teaching positions. There will be insufficient funds for teacher and support staff salaries. The majority of Bureau-funded school employees are local tribal members, which means these cuts will hurt the economies of surrounding rural communities. "These cuts will strike at the reservation level where unemployment is 46 percent and where the nation's First People face further erosion of what amounts to the poorest quality of life in America," says Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Ada Deer.

"The cuts are too deep and too fast. Loss of local employment will result in an increase in child/spouse abuse, domestic violence, and a greater work load for law enforcement," Deer said.

"The non-Indian community will be forced to limit educational services to all students because of unfunded increases in student population. Social services will experience increased needs due to unemployment, student dropouts, diminished family revenues, substance abuse assistance, and shortages of available counseling services. Increased case loads for law enforcement and an overall decrease in the quality of life at the local level are among the devastating effects American Indians will experience."

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United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Washington, D.C. 20240

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 15, 1995

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NEW MEXICO WILL BE HARD HIT BY BIA BUDGET CUTS

"New Mexico's economy is going to be especially hard hit by the U.S. Senate's proposed budget cuts for Indian programs," said Ada E. Deer, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, yesterday. New Mexico, because it is home to most of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' central office operations, in addition to being the site of two area offices and seven agency offices, will bear a major share of the cuts. Additionally, there are twenty-three tribes in New Mexico, each of which are slated for a 32 percent cut in tribal program funds.

"Given the huge cuts proposed in Indian Programs, state economies are definitely going to be hurt," said Deer, who estimates that nearly 5,000 tribal and local BIA agency workers across the United States will lose their jobs in November. The average annual salary, including benefits, for a BIA employee is \$42,172. The \$245-million Senate cut from the 1995 BIA budget, adjusted by the economic multiplier, translates to an almost three-quarter billion dollar negative impact on state economies. "New Mexico alone stands to lose more than \$26,000,000 in tribal base funding; \$6,323,000 in welfare assistance, and approximately \$4,182,000 in Indian schools money for the next school year. The Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe has been cut by \$6,000,000. Additionally, the cuts in tribal roads maintenance funds may affect tribal eligibility for Highway Trust Funds, which could result in a loss of an additional \$32,606,000 in federal highways dollars, and another 500 BIA jobs. "If we factor in the economic multiplier," said Deer, "the economic loss to New Mexico is three times greater."

According to the BIA, cuts of this magnitude will drastically increase tribal unemployment, which already averages 46 percent and significantly reduce services and dollars in Indian communities and surrounding areas. It is estimated that some 2,400 tribal employees will lose their jobs nationwide.

The availability of federal Indian program dollars has insulated the states from much of the financial burden associated with the harsh economic environment of most reservations. Many tribes in the western United States and Alaska are located in rural

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areas, where there is little industry or other economic activity to offset deep federal program cuts and employee layoffs. "Lost jobs mean lost spending," said Deer, adding, "business is going to suffer. People are going to be looking to states and counties to pick up worker displacement costs, such as unemployment-related expenses, increased demand for social services, and public welfare assistance. Reductions and eliminations in federal social programs for Indians will shift a heavy financial burden on to states."

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DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 20, 1995

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INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS CONFEREES GUT THE BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Unprecedented attacks in Congress on American Indians programs demonstrate a reckless disregard for the federal government's deep and historic legal responsibilities to Indian Tribes. Yesterday, the Interior Appropriations conferees proceeded to gut the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the federal agency most responsible for fulfilling the Federal Indian Trust Responsibility. The conferees cut a full 26 percent from the Bureau's Central Office function, compromising the capacity of the agency to perform its mission, provide executive direction, and conduct oversight. With the 28-percent cut in the Area Offices, the Bureau will not be able to provide adequate levels of technical support to the tribes.

"The conferees have crippled the Bureau of Indian Affairs," said Ada E. Deer, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs. "It is unrealistic to expect the Bureau of Indian Affairs to carry out its trust and other obligations without adequate resources." While several conferees attempted to restore funding, to tribal accounts to support essential tribal, services, such as law enforcement, child welfare, social services, fire protection and senior citizen services, in the end the effort failed to achieve the level of restoration needed. The conferees reduced these critical tribal programs (Tribal Priority Allocations) by \$110 million, or 15 percent below the current level.

Among the losers in the budget battle were Indian schoolchildren. Conferees did not restore any of the \$32 million cut by the Senate for elementary and secondary education despite an anticipated 4 percent growth in student enrollment. Neither did the conferees provide funds to address the \$600-million backlog in Indian school construction and repairs including safety violations. Deer said, "Apparently the conferees do not care whether Indian children are educated in unsafe, overcrowded schools."

Senator Slade Gorton (R-WA) was successful in maintaining a special provision singling out certain tribes within the State of Washington for monetary sanctions if the tribes fail to negotiate with competing private interests, notwithstanding the strong opposition of Congressman Sidney Yates (D-IL) and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA).

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DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 27, 1995

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Senate to Consider Provision to Withhold Legal Services from Indigenous Americans

On October 11, 1995, the Labor Health and Human Services Committee will consider an amendment introduced by Senator Slade Gorton (R-WA) in Section 30 of the Labor, Health, and Human Services Bill (S. 1221) that will prohibit the Legal Services Corporation from providing legal assistance to Indians, Indian tribes, Native Hawaiians, or Native Hawaiian organizations with respect to litigation that "may effect or infringe on the property rights of another person."

The Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Ada E. Deer said, "If this language is enacted, it will impede the ability of America's tribal and indigenous peoples from litigating their rights in United States courts of law." Deer questioned the Constitutionality of the provision because it singles out certain identifiable groups and members of such groups and deprives them of services available to all Americans." She suggested that the provision also offends the express language of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which provides that, "No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

Deer pointed out that the United States Senate ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1994, which makes it a violation of International law if a country deprives its citizens of the rights contained in the Covenant. The Senate report, noted that the overwhelming majority of the Covenant's provisions are compatible with existing U.S. law. Deer was among several U.S. representatives who presented the United States' report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee presented on March 29-31, 1995. During the hearing, the U.S. delegation emphasized that U.S. citizens, including American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and other indigenous Americans, already possess the rights contained in the Covenant by operation of Constitutional and statutory law. Among these rights are the right to life, liberty, and security of person, to a fair trial, to participation in public affairs, and to equal protection of the law. The delegates further emphasized that all individuals within the territory of the United States possess these fundamental rights without distinction of any kind, based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, or other status.

Deer added, "Our nation, and the protections our Constitution accords the people of the

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United States, has long served as a model to the rest of the world of a just, free, and democratic society. Legislation restricting the Constitutional rights of American citizens is at best an embarrassment, and at worst, a disgrace.” She closed by quoting the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all...”

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DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 12, 1995

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INDIAN AFFAIRS SECRETARY TO SEE ARCTIC REFUGE, MEET WITH NATIVE VILLAGERS, OBSERVE CARIBOU MIGRATION

Ada Deer, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs, will travel to Alaska on October 19 to speak to Native Alaskans and visit the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR).

On Friday, October 20, at 9:00 a.m. she will address the Alaska Federation of Natives in Anchorage at the William Egan Civic & Convention Center on issues including drastic cuts in the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) FY 1996 budget, self-governance and self-determination. Following the speech she will be available for other media questions.

Early on the morning of Saturday, October 21, Deer will fly to Fairbanks and then to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. After touring the Refuge, she will travel to Arctic Village to meet with Gwich'in chiefs. She will remain in the village overnight to participate in special ceremonies as a guest of the Gwich'in people.

On Sunday, Deer will travel by plane to view the caribou migration toward its winter feeding grounds. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has estimated that over 90 percent of the porcupine caribou calves are born on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in the early summer months.

Assistant Secretary Deer will conclude her activities with a discussion with students at the University of Alaska at Anchorage on Monday, and will return to Washington on Tuesday, October 24.

Any members of the media who would like to accompany her on this unique opportunity to tour the Arctic Refuge, speak with Native Alaskans and discuss the importance of the porcupine caribou herd with Gwich'in people in their ancestral village should contact either Thomas Sweeney (202/219-4150) or Stephanie Hanna (202/208-6416) in the lower 48 states to reserve space on charter aircraft. In Alaska, members of the media interested in traveling with Deer should contact Fairbanks BIA Superintendent Samuel Demientieff at 800/822-3596 or 907/456-0229.